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Exclusionary Male Space and the Limitations of Discursive Reasoning in *Love's Labour's Lost*

Julianne Mentzer

1 When the 'tender juvenal', Moth, explains to Armado that he can logically "study three years in / two words" (I.ii.52-53) his use of discursive reasoning, of absurd logic contained rhetorically, posits the linguistic manner by which the temporal and physical space of the play is determined. By reducing 'three years' to its representative 'two words' Moth demonstrates a temporal impossibility can—if one is persuasive enough—seem transformed by its linguistic signs. The play is rife with this kind of linguistic sleight of hand, but it ultimately proves ineffective. Indeed, *Love's Labour's Lost* has long been noted for its 'playful' and seemingly self-contained use of language—akin to linguistic sport—but not necessarily in conjunction with the problematic deferral of duty that such 'sport' conceals.[1] Often, critical arguments have sought to explain the ending of the play by means of understanding the (proposed) inaction of the play itself. The play toys with the concepts of reality and fiction, what is created by text and discourse and what is concealed, the world without and the world within. In the play itself, language masks a multitude of sins against patriarchal and humanist ideology—the delaying of governmental duty, improper use of education, and the ineffectiveness of securing marital bonds. The imaginative space of the knotted garden and the grounds of Navarre can be seen as "without" the reality of life and the patriarchal sanctions for the development of manhood and leadership. More so, however, it represents a fictive world in which the gentlemen of Navarre delay and defer their duties, revel in their linguistic prowess, and practice literary modes of courtship. This is demonstrated through extensive rhetorical exercises. Indeed, the play borders textually upon *progymnasmata*—the methods of rhetorical training through exercise—and the textual surface of the play puts pressure on what can be the productive use, the final ends, to rhetorical flexing.

2 The "little academe" is only ever a hypothetical space in *Love's Labour's Lost*; it represents the offstage reality of youth, which has passed, and is effectively outside of reach. In its place, is the space of deferral is the textual space of rhetorical exercise, signifying through their discourse the adolescent state of the King and his male court. My argument is that both the texture of the play and the social/political deferral through proposed masculine space, indicate the adolescent nature of the court.[2] Berowne's own desire for deferral (argued as learning from experiential knowledge of the world, i.e. to court and flirt, to feast and revel) indicates that even he sees that the creation of exclusionary space for study is "out of season":

> BEROWNE. [...] Why should proud summer boast
> Before the birds have any cause to sing?
> Why should I joy in any abortive birth?
> At Christmas I no more desire a rose
> Than wish a snow in May's newfangled shows,
> But like of each thing that in season grows.
> So you, *to study now* it is too late,
> Climb o'er the house to unlock the little gate.
> *Love's Labour's Lost*, I.i.102-109 [my emphasis]

And, indeed, in the trajectory of masculine development it is "too late" to study, as the language of the play itself demonstrates the exercise of rhetorical and dialectical modes (while also indicating a kind of stasis in the use of these modes). Thus, the Academe is proposed as a means not only to secure fame, and find grace in the "disgrace of death", but also as a means to delay duty, to be, "Still and contemplative in living art" (I.i.14).

3 At the very subscription of the oath, it is found that this space is not a viable form of exclusion or deferral. The Princess of France is to arrive at court, and the king dismisses the exclusionary space, "We must of force dispense with this decree / She must lie here on mere necessity" (I.i.145-146). Thus, the play depicts the position of an entirely exclusionary male space for knowledge acquisition, but this proposal proves to signify a stagnant—if not impossible—form of existence and a barren *locus* for intellectual advancement, the fruits of which being proposed so that, in the words of King Ferdinand, "Navarre shall be the wonder of the world" (I.i.12). Beyond this desired outcome, the "masculine" space is mentioned in the abstract, always figured offstage. The precepts outlined in the sworn oath attempt to make this space impermeable, but this eventually proves only that this space *cannot* exist without social and political implications.

4 The end result is that the texture and space of the play signifies the deferral of duty—the "problematic" ending breaks the spell of linguistic containment. The texture of the play, the rhetoric and discursive reasoning within the text, the "barren tasks" of the sworn oath, and the apparent permeability of such exclusionary masculine intellectual space—that is, a space subversive to social *mores*—ultimately come together to represent a deferral of duty, a prolonged state of adolescence. It is only outwith the action (or inaction) of the play, outwith the boundaries of the knotted garden, that there is a realization of the implications of such linguistic and physical spaces of adolescence. In this play, it is clear that the Academe (though failed) is antithetical to patriarchal hegemony, that the exercises of linguistic prowess extend the state of adolescence, and that eventually love can be "lost" (or delayed) through a purposeful subversion of social codes (including the duties of a monarch and the patriarchal sanctions for marriage and good husbandry). Shakespeare uses language to put

pressure on antithetical positions and creates a dialogue of elaborate contention to explore the hypothetical situation of a solely masculine, intellectually-based court.

5 The critical focus on *Love's Labour's Lost* has usually centred on the *copia* in linguistic exchange and the play's reliance on witty dialogue and euphuistic language instead of plot structure. It is my argument that this discursive texture is meant to indicate the adolescent state of the court, and the ultimate failings at creating an effective and worthwhile exclusionary male space. Other critical approaches have focused on the intermingling of language with courtly game/sport in the context of courtship, the failings of grace and decorum, and even the idea that the text itself is a "prelude to the more extensive commentary on imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*".[3] Others have examined manifestations of masculine desire, the "Shakespearean preposterous" event of men following women, and more often than not, critics return to the idea of the play's so-called problematic ending.[4] Throughout all of these critical analyses, special attention has been paid to the language of the text. In my consideration, I focus on the language as a means to understand the thematics of prodigality and youthfulness, the idea that the playtext represents an adolescent state of "becoming", and that the beginning and end of the play depict specific points in the trajectory of the humanist prerogatives for masculine development and that the texture of the playtext is itself representative of the rhetorical exercises of the adolescent state. These latter critical approaches, though also primarily focused on the play's language do not take the social implications of deferred duty and the problems of prolonged adolescence into consideration—these are sites of anxiety, and when the "abrupt" ending shatters the linguistically-created world of the play, it is then that the limits of discursive exercise are made most apparent.

6 It seems as if Irene G. Dash first proposed the idea of the "single-sex retreat" as a problematic feature of the play, as an oath bound to an idea with no physical referent.[5] However, her argument, which compares the proposed academe of Navarre to Margaret Cavendish's *Convent of Pleasure*, fails to note the implications of a solely masculine court in comparison to the female space described in Cavendish's work. The problem is not that of actualizing the "single-sex retreat", but in the figure of exclusionary male space as a means to prolong the state of youth for the men of Navarre. It is no longer the season for this type of space, it is antithetical to "necessity". This essay builds upon this observation, and responds to Anthony J. Lewis's assertion that the play figures moderation in temperament, reason and life, the *via media*, as the moralizing answer to a problematic ending, the "temperate life" as "best for all seasons".[6] Though critical work has moved away from trying to justify the abrupt ending of this play, it still seems to be a pervasive focus.[7] I aim to show that the play is only incomplete as it demonstrates gentlemanly life that is incomplete (by the standards of early modern patriarchal hegemony): *Love's Labour's Lost* follows the trajectory of masculine development, from schooling through adolescence, and ends in motion toward the solidification of "manhood".

7 At the subscription to the oath, the male courtiers of Navarre claim not only a retreat from the pleasures of the world, but a deferral of their social and political duties as gentlemen. The semi-pastoral landscape of the court grounds, on the outside of the proposed exclusionary space of the study, figures as an indication of the lords' true physical space.[8] They are not shut up in a study with their books, nor are they engaged in political affairs. Indeed, they are not even involved with the social sphere (which

includes, but is not limited to, the establishment of households and suitable marriages). In the landscape of the garden and fields surrounding the court, the men are figured physically and figuratively in a state of "becoming", between youth and manhood, between their education and the *use* of this education in service to the state and in securing their courtly and social positions. The sworn oath deals with a very specific type of knowledge acquisition, that which *should* not be known. The desire to prolong youthful study to the ends of fame and wonder, does not appear as a proper pursuit for the court of Navarre. Indeed, one could conflate both the desired knowledge that the King describes (forbidden knowledge) with the desired experiential "knowledge" that Berowne utilizes to argue against book-learning (prodigal licentiousness). In both forms, these desires are juvenile, they indicate a desire for the deferral of duty, for prolonging neither productive nor useful study but merely the *status* of youth.

8 When Berowne inquires, "What is the end of study, let me know", the King merely replies, "Why, that to know which else we should not know" (I.i.55-56). This has been analysed by Eric Brown, who notes that the "parallel course" taken by both Marlowe (in *Doctor Faustus*) and Shakespeare (in *Love's Labour's Lost*) primarily deals with the ends of knowledge acquisition. What one *should* not know is what is most desired and Brown's critical analysis seems to hinge on the concept that both plays depict a desire for forbidden and, indeed, hidden knowledge: as both plays dislodge "the epistemological considerations of [...] academicians, both [also] dislocate and overturn established authorities...".[9] To know what one should not is precisely the kind of desire that posits the court as adverse to applicable and useful knowledge—the desired outcome of humanist education systems.[10] In this way, the creation of an exclusionary male space to acquire fame is "out of joint". The problem, then, in attempting to formulate this exclusionary space deals with the epistemological limitations of academic courts. First, their knowledge is figured as abstract, and therefore the physical space is abstracted as well. Second, their desire to know what is forbidden can be likened to the desire to *experience* what is forbidden, both signs of youthful prodigality.

9 Louis Adrian Montrose notes a similar idea, stating, "Navarre and his book-men attempt to indefinitely prolong and extend the temporal and spatial limits of their play world."[11] He sees the boundaries of the play's action, the sporting with wit, and the language games as a kind of deferral, which disrupts the play's (desired) comic end. In Montrose's view, "[t]he imaginative world of study, dreams of fame, games, and courtship *within* the fiction is a counterworld to its primary, actual, and potentially tragic world of politics, finance, war, and mortality."[12] However, I think it is problematic to first conflate the imaginative world depicted in the semi-pastoral setting of the play's action with the proposed exclusionary space of the Academe, and then juxtapose these to the "realities" of death and duty figured at the play's end. This dichotomy rejects the possibility that both the proposed Academe and the "play-world" of the text's action can be seen as deferrals, not wholly imaginary, but figuring a prolonged youthful or adolescent state. The world of the play is an unsustainable existence between realities, that is, between points on the trajectory of masculine maturity. Indeed, the oath is first a means by which the courtiers of Navarre attempt to prolong their youth. This, then, is figured as an offstage and *possible* reality, but one that is made null and void by their abstraction of the physical space and the "necessity" of the Princess's arrival. Within the temporal limitations of the play, the newly established oath is the only referent to the proposed exclusionary male space. This, as it exists in the world offstage, can be seen as a symbolic point on the trajectory of

masculine maturity. Education stands offstage at one end as the reality of youth, and political and financial duty, marriage, and ultimately death stand on the opposite side. The King and his lords are presented only in the prolonged state—first, of an attempted deferral through the acquisition of "forbidden" learning (antithetical to the humanistic pedagogy of applicable learning)—and then, within the action of the play in a space that figures as a threshold— a space between education of youth and the duties of manhood—situated in the semi-pastoral landscape of the knotted garden and the fields outside the court. They are between realities in the trajectory of development, antithetical to patriarchal hegemony.[13]

10 But their duties, the repayment of debt and possible marital match between the princess and the King, function to permeate this desired deferral. The term, outlined in the oath, to not "talk with a woman within the term of three years" must be broken: as Berowne states, "This article, my liege, yourself must break, / For well you know here comes in embassy / The French King's daughter with yourself to speak" (I.i.131-133). And as Boyet hints, by noting that the Princess is sent in embassy to "*Matchless* Navarre" (II.i.7; emphasis my own), her purposes for attending the court may be twofold: to collect on a debt of war and to see if the King is a possible marital "match". Once the initial space outlined in the oath is shown to be an impossible deferral, the gentlemen insist on creating an alternate space in-between by disallowing the women entrance into the court proper:

> KING. You may not come, fair Princess, within my gates,
> But here without you shall be so received
> As you shall deem yourself lodged in my heart,
> Though so denied fair harbour in my house.
> *Love's Labour's Lost*, II.i.171-174

This space of play and wit, of courtship and jest, is a space of prolonged adolescence, a retreat from the realities expected in the trajectory of gentlemanly life. As Richard Corum succinctly states, that "coming out right" (i.e. a conclusion of herteronormative marriage) "was a signal marker of social stability" while the deferral at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost* can be read as site which generates "powerful anxieties".[14] All diplomatic duties are deferred or forgotten. The attempts at the beginning of the play to create a space in which the lords could escape consuming time, to gain grace in the eventuality of their deaths, is transposed onto this semi-pastoral landscape of adolescent "becoming".

11 In his 1974 essay, Anthony J. Lewis claims that critics misidentified the problematic feature within the play: "[t]his insistence, either that the courtiers attempt first an incorrect or immature way of life and then a second more acceptable one or that the play finally condemns both choices, ignores the text and is misleading."[15] He claims that the problem within the text is that the court of Navarre "err[s] neither in choosing the first method (study) nor the second (romance) but in choosing each exclusive of the other."[16] Indeed, there may be a good argument to be made in the need for "moderation", but his assertion that study and romance are the two modes of existence that need to be reconciled in moderation fails to note the trajectory of masculine development in this period. As Alexandra Shepard has clearly identified through her socio-historical work on early modern masculinity, moderation and temperance were an ideological ideal, but this ideal was part of a complicated system in which alternate duties were outlined as well.[17] Lewis's claim that study and romance should be taken in equal measure obscures the aims of masculine maturity. He insists that Shakespeare's

play becomes moralistic, arguing for the *via media* of temperate masculinity. However, two problems emerge when addressing the play in this manner. First, *Love's Labour's Lost* very carefully avoids a moralizing conclusion. Second, "study" in the abstract was a *foundational* activity in the making of gentlemen. It was the application of this study that marked the divide between the state of "becoming" and reaching maturity for well-born gentlemen. In the garden and fields of Navarre, the courtiers stand at the threshold of masculinity. Romance and linguistic sporting are markers of this status.

12 Logic and language are conflated within the text, but the discursive reasoning for exclusionary male space is a deferral of political and patriarchal duty. Even Berowne's argument *against* the creation of the academe depicts an attempt at deferring maturity —which is contained even within his speech. The copiousness of the building argument, the textbook *repetitio* of "Light seeking light doth light of light beguile", and the prompt to "*study me* how to please the eye indeed" all indicate the exercises of rhetorical rhetoric put into a display of (a rather empty) argument,

> BEROWNE. Why, all delights are vain, but that most vain
> Which, with pain purchased, doth inherit pain:
> As painfully to pore upon a book
> To seek the light of truth, while truth the while
> Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look.
> Light seeking light doth light of light beguile;
> So, ere you find where light in darkness lies,
> Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.
> Study me how to please the eye indeed
> By fixing it upon a fairer eye,
> Who dazzling so, that eye shall be his heed,
> And give him light that it was blinded by.
> *Love's Labour's Lost*, I.i.72-79

In addition to the texture of this speech, its content also suggests an adolescent state. The courtiers first figure as prodigal schoolboys, basing their educational pursuit in acquiring fame through forbidden knowledge, and focusing on homosocial interaction devoid of social and political engagement. This is a regression back to a state of youth. Berowne's argument against such study (the pain of poring over a book, when the eyes of maidens can illuminate things so much better) leads to an alternate form of deferral: wanton courtship, witty puns, disguised pageantry, and jests (of all sorts). Soon the others find themselves forsworn.

13 Navarre's comment following Berowne's speech, "How well he's read, to reason against reading" (I.i.94) is a cue to their already highly-educated status. Through the use of their discursive reasoning, for sport, jest, and in wooing, the lords all demonstrate that they have mastered the necessary tools of linguistic manipulation and rhetorical persuasion and can put them to practical use. However, because the language is caught, like the men themselves, in this imaginative world, the usefulness of discursive prowess is absent: "In reason nothing" (Dumaine; I.i.98), to which Berowne counters, "Something then in rhyme" (I.i.99).

14 James L. Calderwood analyses the disconnect between language and reality in *Love's Labour's Lost.* He states, "[i]n perhaps no other play does language so nearly become an autonomous symbolic system whose value, somewhat like that of pure mathematics, lies less in its relevance to reality that in its intrinsic fascination."[18] The main argument that Calderwood makes in this critique is that Shakespeare passes from "a sensuous enchantment with language, a wantoning with words, to a serious consideration of his

medium, his art, and their relation to the social order."[19] Thus this play becomes a kind of meta-narrative, reflecting on the art of composition and self-consciously testing the very limits of linguistic ability. However, the medium of language is shown to lack any kind of productive outcome if it is utilized for sport, jest, and jovial courtship. Though it can be argued that the lords (and the King) reach a point in the end of the play where their courtship contains truth—instead of empty words—, their discourse is ineffective because they cannot persuade the French Princess and her ladies that their words are more than "breath". Indeed, the women seem fully aware, especially upon the arrival of the news of the King of France's death, that the men of Navarre are still within the space of "becoming", that they have yet to prove their abilities as possible husbands.

15 When the courtiers all discover that they have been unfaithful to their oath, the discursive reasoning takes an opposite turn. Berowne's argument applies a series of complicated and connected clauses (as if he were stringing together commonplaces) in a seemingly logical structure:

> BEROWNE. For wisdom's sake, a word that all men love,
> Or for Love's sake, a word that loves all men,
> Or for men's sake, the authors of these women,
> Or women's sake, by whom we men are men,
> Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,
> Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.
> *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV.iii.326-331

The abundant and convoluted use of rhetorical devices, the neatness and contained effect of epanados, the mirroring effects of the use of symploce, suggest an attempt at a deductive form of proof—applying the general, given premises to the particular situation of the oath. However, it bends upon the defining features of the words themselves, and how they can be manipulated and moulded to alternate meanings. It is clear that the purpose of such speech is rationalization, all of the men of court beseeching Berowne to find some trick of language to justify their forswearing of the first oath. This weak reasoning, built upon the deceptive and duplicitous nature of language, meagrely fulfils the new "necessity".

16 Calderwood equates language with a kind of exchange as currency, "a valid linguistic currency must effectively unite what is meant with what is understood",[20] and he makes this analogy significant in discussing the language of the men of Navarre: "[n]ot only has their linguistic currency become grossly inflationary, but they have even circulated a few bad bills in the form of impulsive oaths."[21] This is verbal gambling at its worst, and can be a way by which to equate the masculine court of Navarre to prodigality. Indeed, even Rosaline mocks her gallant's "prodigal wits" (V.ii.64). Berowne and the court of Navarre are subverting both the goals of humanist education (the practical application of rhetoric and dialectic in the conducting of political affairs) and the socio-patriarchal codes of good husbandry. They dedicate their language to sport and pleasure, gambling with their words. In this way, they are—from the onset—prodigals, deferring their duty (and indeed missing the mark) of masculine maturity: securing a household and attending to the affairs of state.[22]

17 Court life and the masculine ideal of marriage are two main goals of the early modern humanist education system. Lorna Hutson argues that, "'good husbandry' was a figure for practical efficacy of a humanistic education in classical literature"[23] Suspended in their adolescent state, arguing for the best means to achieve fame, the lords confine themselves to the "barren tasks" of a prolonged youth indeed. However, the sporting

volley of language and the mirth it creates are the foundation of this play and the source of its pleasure. Calderwood rightly claims, "[u]ntil it becomes a bridge effectively uniting lover with beloved, purport with understanding, the scholars' language will remain inadequate and untrue." This criticism of ineffective linguistic sport reveals the anxieties of misuse of language and misrule that govern the adolescent status of the scholars.[24] Indeed, the play is tinged with real anxieties about misrule, misuse of education, and wayward courtship: the men of Navarre will not yet gain their loves because language does not effectively bridge the two parties. Yet it is the fact that language is so duplicitous and mutable, that produces mirth within the bounds of the imaginative world of Navarre and the play itself. Descent of rhetoric into mere play is another example of the court's prodigality, though the thematics of prodigality as described by Helgerson were always exploited to depict the possibility for redemption and this possibility is obscured by the play's problem of prolonged deferral. The danger in the play is the continued use of language without a logically sound argument, or language without a material referent, the danger of its becoming merely "words, words, words".

18 In many ways the court holds a precarious position between the lords' initial desire to become prodigal schoolboys, and their decision to form a prolonged state of adolescence, of homosocial interaction, sporting courtship and infinite jests, out of mere "necessity". According to pedagogical texts and rhetorical training manuals of the 16th century, the ultimate ends for learning was the development of gentlemen (the learned elite) prepared for service to the state, and to lead them on a path for acquiring virtue in this service. Though the play deals with the proposal of a French academe (a very different "institution" of the period) the play clearly deals with the anxious ideas concerning the ends of education (and deferral of duties). This is derived from the classical tradition—and is pervasive enough in England to enter the vernacular in texts such as Thomas Elyot's *The boke Named the Gouernour* and as built in to the in the humanist (and expressly Protestant) rhetorical manual, Thomas Wilsons's *The Arte of Rhetorique*.[25] Elyot's text is primarily useful in this investigation as it is clearly concerned with the nobility (and gentlemanly elite). In the prologue to the 1534 edition (in address to Henry VIII), he states, "And for as muche as this presente boke treateth of the educacion of them [i.e. the gentry] that hereafter maie be deemed worthy to be gouerneurs of the publike weale under youre highnesse".[26] Wilson's dedicatory address to Lord John Dudley makes a similar claim by use of exemplum with the story of Cineas "a notable Oratour and sometimes scholar" who is able to persuade the peaceable handing-over of "castles and fortresses" to the captain for battle against the Romans. The point of this exemplum was that through learned oratory "what worthier thing can there be, the with a word to winne cities and & whole countries".[27] The concept is not necessarily that language replace armies, but that the power of education's ends is the ability to control, to lead, to 'win' cities, and indeed to be able to serve and control the state. When the state *itself* is "misusing" education, this is a clear indication of the anxiety of misrule woven into the text. The stagnation of the court of Navarre is indicative not of a completely fictive play-world (as Louis Montrose claimed) but a hypothetical imagining of a court that has purposefully withdrawn from political concerns.[28] In this way, the position of "becoming" in the semi-pastoral landscape is not a merely frivolous game, but it demonstrates cultural anxieties about prodigality in the courtly and ruling sphere. The King clearly sees the Academe through a humanist

pedagogical lens, while Berowne's own idea is to learn what is forbidden through what is forbidden in the oath itself:

> BEROWNE. Come on then, I will swear to study so
> To know the thing I am forbid to know:
> As thus, to study where I well may dine,
> When I to feast expressly am forbid;
> Or study where to meet some mistress fine,
> When mistresses from common sense are hid;
> Or, having sworn too hard-a-keeping oath,
> Study to break it, and not break my troth.
> [...]
> KING. These be the stops that hinder study quite,
> And train our intellects to vain delight.
> *Love's Labour's Lost*, I.i.59-66, 70-71

In his response against the waywardness of feasting and womanizing, the King reproves the language of prodigality. However, though he replicates the humanist counter-argument towards misuse of education, he is not posing himself as the director of the Academe: he is rather taking a specific patriarchal stance against the prodigal waywardness that Berowne figures. Berowne's desire to "study" the experiential fails as an Aristotelian discursive reasoning: it stands against patriarchal normative codes to which the King eludes. Yet as the play unfolds, it is clear that both modes are ineffective in obtaining the main goals of masculine development: securing households and utilizing practical knowledge in service to the state. The efficacy of a regression to homosocial learning, to obtaining what one *should* not know, is as reductive as the game-play of courtship within the play.

19 Helgerson outlines the changing dynamics of humanistic educational thought from the mid-1500s through the late 1500s, analysing the changing way in which the "prodigal son" story appears in literature and drama over this time.[29] He notes, first, the very tumultuous times in which the fictional pattern of the prodigal son appears. At a time of economic strain, religious upheaval, and uncertainty, this discourse began as a way for the older (humanist) generations to warn of the problems of prodigality in the younger. It automatically aligned a kind of "wayward" lifestyle to the "wanton" expression of intellect through—what, interestingly enough, the King of Navarre marks as—"vain delights" (I.i.71). The main humanist ideal for education was that young gentlemen would learn oration and style as a means to *begin* their lives as a service to the state. When these humanist skills were used to produce poetry, plays, or the like, it was perceived as a direct challenge to the goals of their education. In the same way, the courtiers of Navarre, by "reasoning against reading", secretively forswearing fidelity to the oath, arguing the contrary, manipulating words, composing euphuistic Petrarchan sonnets, mocking the play of the Nine Worthies, and ultimately playing games with language and alternate characters, are clearly depicted as prodigals.

20 When they first arrive in Navarre, the Princess and her ladies are intrigued by the gentlemen of Navarre's court: Boyet's comment makes it clear that the "matchless" king has been marked as a possible suitor for the Princess. However the Princess shows little interest in courtship, a disdain for flattery, and ultimately a level-headed approach to securing a husband. As courtship is not the purpose of attending the court in the first place, and reality of death is what calls them away, the female characters of the play represent a calling towards maturity, though they are swept up in the fun and games of the semi-pastoral space. Upon arrival, they counter at each point love's

conceits created by the courtiers: though they admire their "wit", they are inclined to do business and deal with "reality" before losing themselves in the imaginative sphere that has been created in the court of Navarre. Mark Breitenberg asserts that the "Princess exposes the falseness of Petrarchan flattery" by depicting these conceits as hollow, "barren tasks" indeed, like the men's proposed assignment in the first proposed oath, in sharp contrast to the realities of political economies (the payment of debts) and the inevitability of the end of life (the reality of death, as figured offstage).[30] The Princess says both, "We are wise girls to mock our lovers so" (V.ii.58) and when the men plan to arrive dressed as "Muscovites" to woo them, "The effect of my intent is to cross theirs. / They do it but in mocking merriment, / And mock for mock is only my intent" (V.ii.138-140). Thus, the men's courtship is always only seen as sport, and the women will match them only for sport, "There's no such sport as sport by sport o'erthrown" (V.ii.153). The women see this courtship as frivolity, as sport. In this way they do not recognise the courtiers (and the King) of Navarre as sincere suitors, or indeed as serious and socio-politically engaged, as men ready to secure a household and undertake gentlemanly duty.

21 Perhaps it is Holoferenes, in his pedantic manner, who recognizes the lack of social civility and gentlemanliness of the court's style as an indication of their youthful, prodigal natures. It is fitting that the pedant should bring this to the fore, cementing the gentlemen's figured position as adolescent. In their mocking response to the performance of the 'Nine Worthies', Holofernes finds their behaviour (and the style of their speech) antithetical to the manner of gentlemanly conduct, "This is not generous, not gentle, not humble" (V.ii.623). Thomas Greene analyses the play in the context of "grace" in the period, but ultimately bases his main critique on style: "[i]t is concerned with *styles*, modes of language and gesture and action which befit, in varying degrees, the intercourse of civilized people [...]. Only at the end, and much more surprisingly, does it turn out to reflect the failure of all style."[31] The ending of the play does not, however, depict the failure of all style, but a failure of "style-misused". Rhetorical persuasion, on the part of Navarre and his men, does not fail, it is rather that *decorum* having largely been ignored, it is disjointed from the actual, necessary objectives of courtly men. Their linguistic prowess is clear, but it is out of place and time, or rather caught within the imaginative sphere of stagnant youth, of the pastoral 'inbetweenness'. As the French Princess and her ladies depart, Greene asserts that "[w]e must always be able to assume that the gentlemen are salvageable as social animals and potential husbands, and need only the kind of education provided by laughter and the penances to which, at the close, they are assigned."[32] However, it is not laughter that finally provides their education. It is the sobering reality that life exists beyond the semi-pastoral world of the prolonged adolescence that they have inhabited. Exclusionary male space is barren, but the penance for prodigality is hopeful.

22 Critics often note the symmetry of oaths from the onset of the imagined Academe to the penance dispensed to each male courtier by the ladies of France in the ending. It is often seen as a closure that directly mirrors the opening, holding the same anxieties of oath breaking. This anxiety is made clear when the ladies voice their fear that their matches will once again be forsworn. However, the final tasks presented to the men of Navarre, their new labours, are singular. Their new oaths are not mutual, the exclusionary male space that they hoped to inhabit at the start is completely disbanded as they must serve their new penances singularly. Though the anxiety that they

individually will not undertake these tasks, or uphold their new oaths, is indeed still present, the singularity displayed in the closure indicates a kind of maturity of masculinity: the courtiers are no longer grouped as schoolboys turning away to their books, or as fellows jesting in a state of adolescence, but are made to undertake tasks specific to their main follies. In this way, the imagined exclusionary male space is finally dismantled and the courtiers must surface from the fictive world of jest and sport. It is a step towards the winning of love.

23 In sum, Navarre is a world of linguistic adolescence where the realities of death, of debts, and indeed, of good husbandry are not found. The labours presented within the playtext are shown as a parody, they hint at the Herculean task of winning love by twisted language and sport alone. However, as the play concludes, it is clear that there must be form to the matter, a referent to the sign, reality for the imaginative. The great and true labours are to unfold outside the playtext: they are the things of life and are "too long for a play" (Berowne, V.ii.866).

NOTES

1. Louis Adrian Montrose, "'Sport by sport o'erthrown': *Love's Labour's Lost* and the Politics of Play", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language,* vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter, 1977), 528-552.

2. Richard Corum, "'The Catastrophe Is a Nuptial': *Love's Labour's Lost*, Tactics, Everyday Life", in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday,* Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt, eds., Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, p. 271.

3. See James L. Calderwood, "*Love's Labour's Lost*: A Wantoning with Words", *Studies in English Literature*, Vol. 5, No. 2. (Spring, 1965), 317-332; Trevor Lennam, "'The ventricle of memory': Wit and Wisdom in *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Shakespeare Quarterly,* vol. 24, No. 1 (Winter, 1973), 54-60; Louis Adrian Montrose, *op. cit.*; Thomas M Greene, "*Love's Labour's Lost:* The Grace of Society", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 22, No. 4 (Autumn, 1971), 215-328; Joseph Westlund, "Fancy and Achievement in *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 18, No.1 (Winter, 1967), 27-46.

4. See Mark Breitenberg, "The Anatomy of Masculine Desire in *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 43, No. 4 (Winter, 1992), 430-449; Patricia Parker, "Preposterous Events", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 43, No. 2 (Summer, 1992), 186-213.

5. Irene G. Dash, "Single-Sex Retreats in Two Early Modern Dramas: *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Convent of Pleasure*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 47, No. 4 (Winter, 1996), 387-395. In this essay she outlines the lack of any physical description of the "academe" as it is presented within the play.

6. Anthony J. Lewis, "Shakespeare's Via Media in *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 16, No. 2 (1974), 248.

7. H.R. Woudhuysen, in *The Arden Shakespeare* version of the play (London and New York, Bloomsbury, 1998) notes the connections in this play to Philip Sidney's work in *The New Arcadia*, concluding that the 'abrupt' endings in both texts are indicative of specific Renaissance stylistics. See Introduction, p. 2-7.

8. I use the term 'semi-pastoral' as an indication of the space outwith the courts setting, yet not developed as a green space, such as the forest of Arden in Shakespeare's *As You Like It.* In this way, it is a conscious space created beyond the court but not without the social necessities of courtly duty.

9. Eric C. Brown, "Shakespeare's Anxious Epistemology: *Love's Labour's Lost* and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 45, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), p. 20-21.

10. See Richard Helgerson's *The Elizabethan Prodigals*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976 for instances of subversion of humanist educational purposes. Also, for a rigorous account of humanist education systems, see Mike Pincombe's *Elizabethan Humanism: Literature and Learning in the Late Sixteenth Century*, London, Longman, 2001.

11. Montrose, *op. cit.*, p. 542.

12. *Ibid*., p. 543.

13. See Alexandra Shepard's *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003 for a cultural analysis of 'manhood' in the period and "From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700", *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 44, No. 2 (2005), 281-295 for an analysis of 'alternate' masculinities.

14. Corum, *op. cit.* p. 271.

15. Lewis, *op. cit*., p. 241.

16. *Ibid*., p. 242.

17. Though certainly not the first to assert this claim, Alexandra Shepard makes a very strong argument for the divergent forms of "masculinity" in contention with these ideals (primarily found in conduct literature or alternate homiletic narratives) in *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (*op. cit*). and "From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700" (*op. cit*.).

18. Calderwood, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 318.

20. *Ibid*., p. 326.

21. *Ibid*.

22. My understanding of the "problems" of prodigality, from a humanist perspective, is derived from Richard Helgerson, *op. cit*.

23. Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth Century England*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994 p. 56.

24. Calderwood, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

25. Thomas Elyot, *The boke Named the Gouernour,* London, 1534 and Thomas Wilson *The Arte of Rhetorique*, London, 1553.

26. Elyot, *op. cit*., sig A2^{v}.

27. Wilson, *op. cit*., sig A1^{r}-A2^{v}.

28. Montrose, *op. cit.*, p. 528-552.

29. Helgerson, *op. cit.*

30. Breitenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

31. Greene, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

32. *Ibid*., p. 317.

ABSTRACTS

Love's Labour's Lost depicts a hypothetical position of an entirely exclusionary male space for knowledge acquisition. I examine the implications, through analysis of discursive reasoning within the text, of the "barren tasks" of the sworn oath, and the apparent failure of such exclusionary intellectual space. In this play it is clear that the Academe is antithetical to patriarchal hegemony, that the play world is caught in a state of adolescent "becoming", and that eventually love can be lost (or delayed) through a purposeful subversion of social codes. In this way, the male space that is imagined is proposed as a continuation of youthful education systems, the space of the play depicts a prolonged state of adolescence (and prodigality), and the ending depicts the necessary means to move forward in the trajectory of gentlemanly 'manhood.'

Peines d'amour perdues met en scène l'hypothèse d'un espace masculin entièrement consacré à l'acquisition du savoir, à l'exclusion de toute autre activité. À travers l'analyse du raisonnement discursif au sein du texte, cet article étudie les conséquences logiques des « tâches arides » mentionnées dans le serment prêté par les hommes de Navarre et l'échec apparent d'un espace intellectuel ainsi fondé sur l'exclusion. Il apparaît clairement que l'« Académie » est incompatible avec l'hégémonie patriarcale, que la force des émotions triomphe même chez les plus « rationnels » et que l'amour peut être perdu (ou du moins différé) par la subversion délibérée des codes sociaux. Ainsi, l'espace masculin envisagé se comprend dans la lignée des systèmes d'éducation conçus pour les enfants, la pièce mettant en scène une adolescence prodigue prolongée ; la fin présente les moyens nécessaires au passage des gentilshommes à l'âge « adulte ».

INDEX

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